

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Fiscal Year 2012 Conference report (H.R. 2055).

However, I regret the process that brought this bill to the floor. This bill was posted only hours before it was brought to the floor. No member has read this bill and this is one more time that the Majority has broken its promise to run this House in an open and transparent manner.

I am pleased that this bill included the full \$40 million that I secured earlier this year for suicide prevention and counseling programs for our active duty, Guard & Reserve, and veteran populations. The suicide epidemic among our veterans--at least 18 take their own lives every day--is a national scandal, and it must stop. This funding will help innovative peer-to-peer counseling programs like the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's ``Vets4Warriors" get the resources they need to reach veterans in need before a personal crisis becomes another family tragedy.

This bill honors our commitment to our ally, Israel, by providing \$3.075 billion in direct aid, including \$235 million for the continued development of the Arrow and David's Sling missile defense systems. Over this past year, we've already seen that America's investment in another innovative and successful Israeli tactical anti-missile system, Iron Dome, has saved Israeli lives. Had some Republican presidential candidates had their way last year and aid to Israel had been zeroed out, Iron Dome would not have been there to save those Israelis who came under missile attack this year.

I am very pleased to see that funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund was increased by \$21 million over Fiscal Year 2011. Although the current level of \$322.8 million is far below the authorized amount of \$900 million this is still an improvement over earlier versions of this legislation.

Historic preservation is an important goal, and I am pleased that the National Park Service's Heritage Area program remains funded at the same level for 2012 as was last year. This funding is important for the upkeep and management of various sites of historical interest around the country, including the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in my district.

As a research scientist, I have long supported federal investment in basic research. I am pleased to see that this bill provides for Department of Energy Office of Science \$4.9 billion, an increase of \$31 million over Fiscal Year 2011. The Office of Science is the nation's primary sponsor of research in the physical sciences and has been integral to the development of dozens of innovative technologies. I am also pleased that H.R. 2055 provides \$275 million for the ARPA-E research program, 53 percent more than Fiscal Year 2011. ARPA-E supports high-risk, high-reward research on energy technologies. Funding for ARPA-E directly contributes to the creation of new technologies, new industries, and new jobs, exactly what we need to grow our economy. Further, the conference report provides more than \$400 million for Fusion Energy Sciences in the Department of Energy. Although I would have liked to see funding levels of at least \$32 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), I am pleased that this bill provides almost \$31 billion in funding for NIH.

I am pleased that this conference report provides \$150 million for the Department of Education's Mathematics and Science Partnerships. I have been a leader in Congress working on protecting funding for these partnerships, which improve student achievement in mathematics and science by combining colleges with K-12 school districts in order to support math and science teachers with continued training.

I am deeply disappointed that this bill zeros out funding for the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP). FLAP is the only federal program that supports K-12 foreign language education which is critical to our nation's economic and national security. Rather than ending this successful program we should be working to strengthen it. I will redouble my efforts to restore this critical funding next year.

This bill rejected attacks on our nation's arts and culture and provides the full \$146 million requested the National Endowment for the Humanities and the full \$146 million requested for the National Endowment for the Arts. The arts and humanities are good for our society at large and significant contributors to our economic development as well.

Another of my many disappointments with this bill is the 17 percent cut to grant programs for firefighters and other first responders. Natural and man-made disasters don't take a holiday, and neither should our support for our firefighters, EMS, and other first responders. This cut is irresponsible, and it will endanger public safety.

Unfortunately, the majority insisted on including some controversial policy riders in this

appropriations bill. I am disappointed that the agreement includes a provision that would change responsibility for enforcement of the Clean Air Act on the Outer Continental Shelf from the EPA to the Department of the Interior. The EPA has been successfully enforcing the Clean Air Act for over forty years. EPA scientists understand the law and how to keep the air we breathe clean and safe. We must work to ensure that the Clean Air Act is still fully enforced on the Outer Continental Shelf.

I am also disappointed that the majority insisted on rolling back successful innovation in the lighting industry by mandating in this legislation that agencies cannot enforce energy efficient standards for light bulbs. Congress has a responsibility to maintain regulatory certainty that encourages the private sector to make needed investments in research, development, and innovation. This policy rider turns back the innovation clock in the lighting industry.

Regrettably, the conference report contains \$35 million for the United Nations Population Fund rather than the \$65 million requested. Yet, I am pleased that it rejects the House Majority's attempt to cut all funding for the UNFPA which provides crucial reproductive-health care, not abortion, to the world's poorest women. The conference report extends a policy rider on the District of Columbia, which prevents the District to spend its local money on women's health care services. Further, the conference report included \$5 million for failed ``abstinence-only'' programs, which have been shown to have no long-term positive effects.

This is not a perfect bill, but it prevents a looming government shutdown. Further, it provides funding increases for a number of critical programs and rejects many of the dangerous cuts contained in the funding bills that the House previously approved. I support passage of this bill despite its pessimistic view of what America could achieve through more ambitious funding of the programs covered under the bill.